

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and FSA’s Minority-Serving and Under-Resourced Schools Division (MSURSD)

Background

The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, defines an HBCU as: “...any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary [of Education] to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation.” On Feb. 12, 2002, President George W. Bush signed Executive Order 13256 which transferred the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities to the Office of the Secretary within the U.S. Department of Education (ED) which oversees advocacy and support of 105 historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly black institutions (PBIs). In addition to the political, policy and strategic support provided by the White House Initiative, HBCUs also receive support from Federal Student Aid’s Minority-Serving and Under-Resourced Schools Division (MSURSD) team which provides programmatic information, opportunities for collaboration, training and advocacy.

The Statistics

- Although HBCUs were originally founded to educate Black students, they have historically enrolled students other than Black Americans. This diversity has increased over time. In 2011, non-Black students made up 19 percent of enrollment at HBCUs, compared with 15 percent in 1976;
- Enrollment at HBCUs in 2011 was 61 percent female, up from 53 percent in 1976. In 2011, some 87 percent of HBCU students attended a 4-year institution, while 13 percent attended a 2-year institution;
- A higher percentage of HBCU students attended public institutions than private, not-for-profit institutions (76 vs. 24 percent);
- In 2010–11, most of the 46,000 degrees conferred by HBCUs were bachelor’s degrees (71 percent) and master’s degrees (16 percent) (Source: Institute for Education Statistics, 2015)

Federal Student Aid Support

The Minority-Serving and Under-Resourced Schools Division (MSURSD) team within Federal Student Aid is actively engaged with America’s HBCUs. Examples include:

- Training on effective administration of Title IV programs;
- Serving as conduit for information and guidance from the Department;
- Providing expertise in navigating the challenging landscape of student lending;
- Inviting HBCUs to workshops on fiscal responsibility and Cohort Default Rate management, which included 34 total in-person workshops held from March – July 2015.

Partnerships between FSA, HBCUs, Associations and Key Stakeholders

MSURSD provides a range of support services designed to strengthen the Title IV administrative capabilities of HBCUs, Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribally Controlled Colleges (TCIs) and other minority serving and “under-resourced” identified institutions. The MSURSD team continuously seeks out new opportunities to partner with associations and key stakeholders to more efficiently bring together the tools, information and resources that HBCUs need to be fully successful. Organizations that are key partners with MSURSD include the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO) and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund. Such partnerships have been particularly important in light of recent program changes, such as FSA’s implementation of changes for the determination of adverse credit history, which had a significant impact upon HBCUs.

In partnership with FSA and key stakeholders, HBCUs have deployed innovative approaches towards default management and reduction. Such strategies include implementation of a default management plan that engages stakeholders, identifies approaches to reducing default rates, and tracks measurable goals. These schools have increased borrower awareness of obligations through incorporating borrower topics at orientation sessions and providing enhanced entrance and exit counseling.

Thanks in part to these efforts and stakeholder collaborations, as of September 2014 all 101 eligible HBCUs have official FY 2011 3-year cohort default rates that fall below regulatory thresholds. No HBCUs are subject to cohort default rate sanctions or the consequent loss of Title IV student financial assistance program eligibility.

HBCUs continue a proud tradition as vibrant centers of intellectual inquiry and engines of scientific discovery and innovation. New waves of students, faculty, and alumni are building on their rich legacies and helping America achieve our goal of once again leading the world in having the highest proportion of college graduates by the year 2020.

More Information

Information from the [U.S. Department of Education](#)

Information from the [National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education](#)